



## Maria Desforbes, RCM

**Designation(s):** RCM, ACCI, General Licence

**Company:** J & W Condominium Management Ltd

**Year entered the profession:** 1997

**Year RCM obtained:** April 21, 2006

**Other education:** I am a graduate from Mohawk College in a general business course and later did part-time studies to obtain a Managerial Certificate at Mohawk College in Hamilton

**Mentor(s) in the industry:** You can say the CCI Golden Horseshoe Chapter members are mentors to me, as I have been a Director on the committee for approximately 18 years.

**What path brought you to a career as a condominium manager?** It was by accident I got into this field. Previously I had worked in health care for 20 years, and then suddenly, they cut back middle management, and I lost my job. At that time, I had just purchased a condo and got elected to the board. The property manager managing my condo stated they were looking for employees and had no luck. They hired two people as managers, and they lasted only a week. In dealing with me, she thought I would do well in this field and asked if I would be interested in giving it a go. I said sure, when do you want me to start? She said yesterday, and then my career path in property management commenced.

I was hired, shadowed a property manager, and then signed up for courses available through ACMO and CCI. I learned from hands-on experience. During that time, with my hands-on experience and the courses I had taken, I signed up to write my RCM exam, which I successfully obtained in 2006.

**How has your membership in ACMO helped you in your career?** Yes, my membership has helped significantly.

The educational material we received, the quarterly *CM Magazine*, which are excellent, and the yearly conferences and courses that I attended made me more knowledgeable in the field. Always great networking opportunities.

**What is one must-have skill for a condominium manager? Why?** The primary must-have skills for a condominium manager are people skills and patience. Especially nowadays, it has been considerably more stressful dealing with some of the residents and boards in

another 5-7 years, no matter the challenges I have encountered! I will not give it up at this time.

**What's your biggest challenge as a manager?** The biggest challenge as a manager is finding tradespeople to do minor repairs. The contractors are having a hard time finding supplies, to begin with, e.g. glass is hard to get, so replacing a sealed unit could take up to 3 months, and clients do not understand why it is taking so long. Also, the costs of supplies, such as wood, glass,



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a condo due to what has been happening with COVID, the economy, and, more notably, more cases of mental illness in the condominium population. As a manager, we tend to take a lot of abuse from different clients, etc., and you must be able to remove yourself and find a way to relax and remove yourself from harmful negative situations.

**Tell us about a personal success story on the job.** There are so many success stories in my life, being in the industry for 25 years, and it isn't easy to highlight one as they are all equally important. The fact that I have stuck to this field for the last 25 years is a success in itself, and I want to stay at least for

and concrete, have increased considerably, and it costs a lot more money to do repairs in a condo. Then you have the challenge of explaining to people why their condo fees have increased considerably.

**What's your favourite part of the job?** My favourite part of the job is meeting so many people from all walks of life, condo owners, professionals such as other Property Managers, lawyers, engineers, contractors, etc. I learn a lot from the professionals I deal with. But every situation is different. I am a people person and enjoy people in general, and if I can help them out, I go the extra mile for them. I enjoy attending all the

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condominium-related conferences and trade shows as I can network with all aspects of people who service the condominium industry. I have been an ACMO member since 2000 (22 years) and have learned much. I've enjoyed attending the yearly conference since 2000 and have not missed any except for the last two years due to COVID.

**Best business advice you ever received.** You can never learn enough, so attending as many conferences, webinars, and educational sessions as possible is essential to keep ahead of the game. As things change almost monthly, you must be on top of your education. But I believe things are changing for the better!

**Answer this statement – I am an RCM because...** I am an RCM because it is important to me. With my many years of experience, I can be proud to have achieved that level in my career! It also shows that I am a professional and expert in the field. I can't believe I have been doing this for the past 25 years - my silver anniversary!

**Where do you see yourself in five years?** Well, I am getting close to retirement, but I plan to keep going in this

field for at least another 5 to 7 years! I cannot see myself not doing this work! I have amazing clients, most of whom I have managed for many years!

**What recent project that you completed can we highlight?** I was involved in a corridor refurbishment in a 19-storey high-rise building in Kitchener that is approximately 45 years old. It made quite a difference in the looks of the building, and the value of the units doubled. We found a company that assessed the property and came up with different options on colours, flooring, wall covering etc. We formed a small committee with a couple of owners, two board members and myself. When the designer brought in the proposal, the committee came up with two options as to what they liked in flooring, wall covering, colour, doors, etc.

Interestingly, everyone was on the same page and wanted the same choices. The work was done well, and the building looks like new. A real estate agent commented that he could not believe how wonderful the site looked and that whoever chose the colour scheme material did an amazing job. ■

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